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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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LETTERS FROM NAVY NURSES

The letters from the *U. S. S. Relief* move me to send you a different picture from the note book of a Navy nurse, but I "have been on pleasure bent, although of frugal mind" and have had the vacation of my life; a much appreciated opportunity, full of interesting incidents and novel experiences. My trip to Zamboanga was delightful. It is a typically tropical little village, peopled by Filipinos and Moros. It is bordered by the ocean, most calm and peaceful when we were there; sheltered by stately cocoanut trees, canopied by the cloudless blue of heaven and protected by the benediction of the wondrous Southern Cross. There is neither hot nor rainy season in that climate, as the heat and rain are more or less equally distributed throughout the year. We ran close to Jola, which is the garden spot of the world, but at present Zamboanga is the only port of call in the Southern Islands. This trip occupied seven days. The following week we started for Peking on the army transport *Merritt*. We stopped two days in Dairien to take on beans for the Chinese Relief Commission. This is an enterprising Japanese town and quite a shipping port, connecting by rail with Manchuria and other points. We spent one day exploring the shops and shrines, and for two days we went to Port Arthur, which must be delightful in summer, but was frigidly cold and barren in winter. Then we took the train for Peking—such a wonderfully interesting place! The main thoroughfares are broad and long and one sees "all kinds and conditions of men;" the high and the lowly; foreigners from every clime; limousines, Pekingese carts, rickshaws, donkeys, pedestrians, and occasionally camel caravans, passing to and fro all the day long. The side streets are numerous and narrow. In many instances, the door yards are enclosed by mud walls the height of the one story dwelling. There are many good shops in out-of-the-way places, but these can be found only by the aid of a guide and when time is so limited, it does not seem wise to use any part of it for shopping when there are so many unusual places to visit. Although damp, dark and dusty in their present state, the temples and palaces were built on a magnificent scale. It is amazing to think that so old a country has preserved its solidarity and traditions intact throughout the ages, passing its superstitions from one generation to another to the present time. And it is only since the establishment of the Republic that any radical changes have taken place. Previous to this, the Emperor conducted the ancient routine of the annual and semi-annual visits to the altar of Heaven, the temples of the universe and the hall of agriculture and so on, attended by all the pomp and ceremony of the Court. Ancestral worship still exists and virtually every place of business has its little shrine and ancestral tablet with burning of incense, general throughout the empire. We were saddened in watching the ceremonies performed before the altars of the Medicine Temple for the recovery of the sick. The laity go before the altar, offer paper flowers, burn imitation paper money, and present gifts of flowers and animals cut from paper, and make various requests. They carry out their little service unattended by the presence of a priest and without the sanctity of ritual. I had an English speaking Chinese guide and it proved a good investment in saving my time, and also because he took me to many places and pointed out various unusual things that otherwise would have been overlooked. I was a little apprehensive in starting out alone, but

I was not particularly inconvenienced and had a much better time than I anticipated. This trip to Peking occupied nearly a month, but much of it was spent at sea, and having had a taste of the Orient, I wanted more, so when I returned, I started out again for Hong Kong and Canton with a day at Macao. I sailed from Manila on the *Empress of Russia*, a floating palace, and had a charming cabin mate who was traveling alone and was very congenial, so we kept together throughout the trip. There is a saying that Peking is noted for the classics, Canton for arts and craft, and that is as I found it. With the exception of Shameen with its consulates and foreign residents, the city is strikingly Chinese. We saw all kinds of work going on in the narrow, crowded streets with the open front shops; ivory carving in all its stages, from the huge tusks to the dainty charms so eagerly sought by the tourists; Jade Street with its rows of shops and many colored jades made into every conceivable shape and personal adornment; Fan Street, where myriads of fans are made from chicken feathers; rows of shops of tailors, cabinet makers, cobblers, tinsmiths, decorators, lacquerers, pottery makers and silk weavers. The family unit, with primitive living conditions somewhere in the background, constitutes the warp and woof of most of the trades. Child labor laws and race suicide are unknown; little tots of six and eight years of age do their bit along with the older members of the family. The streets are so narrow that sedan chairs cannot pass in places. There are no beasts of burden. It is the human back that carries what is usually the load of the beast or the tackle block and pulley in other lands. The sight which affected me most was that of the women or young girls carrying a heavy load from either shoulder, slow, patient plodding; never the semblance of a smile on their drawn faces, but how can one expect them to smile when labor has been their heritage for generations? Hong Kong is a splendid British Colony built on the rock ribbed granite hills. The business section has fine buildings, there are beautiful homes, flowers and foliage in abundance, and the weather was ideal at that time. The harbor is one of the busiest and most picturesque in the world. The drive around the island was delightful. Macao is a Portuguese settlement, four hours' river trip from Hong Kong, and formerly the Monte Carlo of the Orient. I am going up into the hills to Baguio for a few days and while waiting for this transportation, I have been studying Manila. Sometimes, we overlook the interesting things near home. Perhaps it is because I expect to return to the United States in the near future that I decided to know more about Manila. The Walled City under the Spanish regime was a city of churches; they are many and interesting, both from the architectural and historical viewpoint; most of them dating back to the 15th century. The churches and the native markets are the chief points of interest, but it is a hustling little city and quite cosmopolitan. Kipling wrote: "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet," but some one who has toured the Orient, declared that the twain had met in Manila. I am feeling physically fine after my rest and the tonic of change and am ready for any "Service emergency."

Canacao, P. I.

M. B.

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